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Comprehensive
General Plan

RECREATION ELEMENT

Background

Parks and Recreation issues are incorporated in the General Plan under the heading of Recreation Element. In addition to the discussion of parks, open space and recreation facilities, the Recreation Element also addresses the need and design parameters for bike paths, and hiking and equestrian trails. This Element is, therefore, divided into two distinct primary components: Parks and Trails. Since each portion of this element clearly has differing requirements and parameters, two separate discussions have been included.

PARKS

Park open space, recreation facilities and organized sports are important community traditions in the City of Blythe. These facilities and activities have been basic to strengthening the fabric and cohesiveness of the community. Beyond the city limits the resources of the Colorado River and Colorado Desert have greatly enhanced the quality of life for the residents of the Palo Verde Valley and the entire Southwest region. The importance of these two resources and their long-term viability cannot be overstated. Within the City residents benefit from substantial existing open space, park and recreational facilities. The Blythe Municipal Golf Course, located on the Mesa northwest of the City is also an important community and regional recreational resource.

Parks, open space areas, and recreational facilities are essential components defining the quality of life of a community. Park and recreation areas provide accessible open space areas and direct contact with the natural environment. Recreation has been termed refreshment for the body, the spirit, and the mind. The preservation of park and open space areas becomes increasingly important in urban settings where development and associated traffic and noise tend to remove and isolate residents from the natural environment. The planning of parks, open space, and recreation facilities requires consideration of the types and intensities of uses the facilities are intended to serve.

The heightened interest for open space and recreation amenities within apartment complexes and planned residential developments (PRDs) has lead to the design of these facilities in new multi-family residential developments. Developments are planned around ponds, pools, tennis courts and landscaped open space areas. Whether residents of private communities or single family neighborhoods, City residents are avid walkers and bicyclers and can be seen taking full advantage of all park and open space areas in the City.

Existing Parks/Facilities

Miller Park

Miller Park encompasses about 11.5 acres at the southeast corner of 14th Avenue and S. Lovekin Boulevard. Park facilities consist of a softball field with night-lighting, two soccer fields (occur within the softball field), children play areas, basketball court, lighted sand volley ball court, covered picnic areas and bar-b-q pits, RV dump station and potable water, restroom facilities and approximately 50 parking spaces. Packing sheds and other agri-business activities and land uses occur on three sides of the park and generate related traffic consisting of a large percentage of large trucks and trailers.

Todd Park

Todd Park encompasses approximately 20 acres, extending north from Barnard Street to Chanslor Way, and from Broadway west to Main Street. Todd Park includes the 5,600 square foot Blythe Community Center located at the southwest corner of Broadway and Chanslor Way. Other facilities at the park include two major and one minor league baseball fields, two pee-wee and senior baseball fields, horseshoe courts, basketball courts, band stand (gazebo), extensively landscaped open space areas, parking and restroom facilities. The City also operates a small maintenance shop and storage yard within the park. The park's baseball facilities are currently being upgraded and will continue to be an important community tradition to welcome new families and visitors to Blythe.

Appleby Park

The Appleby Park encompasses approximately 4 acres, occurring immediately south of Donlon Street, between South Second and South Third Streets. The park is bounded on the south by the Appleby Elementary School, which extends south to 14th Avenue. The Appleby Park facility serves the immediate single family neighborhoods occurring generally between Broadway and South Seventh Street, and south of Interstate-10. Facilities at the park include a small softball field, swings and various types of playground equipment, and open space areas.

Pocket Parks

Engevick Park, Avenue "A" Park and Bommer Park

The Engevick Park is located at the northwest corner of Carlton Avenue and Barnard Street. The Avenue "A" Park is located mid-block on Avenue "A", between 8th and 9th Streets. The Bommer Park is located at the northeast corner of 8th Street and Barnard Street. These small parcels each encompass a single family lot, are landscaped and have equipped play areas, and are good examples of "pocket parks". They provide common play areas for neighborhood children and meeting places for parents and neighbors.

These types of "pocket parks" can also be passive facilities that have been designed and constructed to convey the character of the neighborhood and provide a pleasing landscaped open space area to sit in, walk through and view. Both the City and private developers could participate in the development of these parks and the expense of maintenance might be addressed through the establishment of a landscape maintenance assessment district.



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Other Public Facilities

The open space and recreation facilities of the Palo Verde Unified School District, and also the Palo Verde Valley Community College, provide important and valuable recreation opportunities for children and adults during non-school use hours. Community facilities of this type include swimming pool, track and field facilities, basketball courts, tennis courts, playground equipment, playing fields and substantial amounts of landscaped open space areas.

Blythe Municipal Golf Course

The Blythe Municipal Golf Course is sited on the Mesa formed where the alluvial fan of the Big Maria Mountains meets the incised Colorado River bed approximately 4 miles north-west of the city limits. The golf course area of the mesa rises about 150 feet above the valley floor. The City owned and operated facility is a moderately difficult 6,800 yard championship course and constitutes a significant community asset, broadening and enhancing the range of recreational activities available to City residents and regional visitors.

Regional and County Recreation Resources

The City of Blythe and the Palo Verde Valley are blessed with two major regional open space/recreation resource areas, the Colorado River and the Colorado Deserts. The County of Riverside also plays an active role in making RV camping and river-oriented facilities available for rental year-round. The County owns and, in some instances, operates park and recreation facilities along the Colorado River. The County General Plan also identifies primary and secondary riding and hiking trails, primary trails occurring along the Colorado River and secondary trails occurring just east of the Blythe Airport. A brief description of regional and County facilities and resources is provided below.

Colorado River Resource Area

The Colorado River provides important open space and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors of the Palo Verde Valley. In addition to encouraging the development of Recreational Vehicle (RV) and camping facilities, the river attracts a large number of day-users who either live locally, stay in area motels, or camp in other areas of the Valley.

Hunting, fishing, water sports, nature watching and other "passive" enjoyment of the river resource are all affected by the river's level. Drought conditions may somewhat limit river use. Future allocations of Colorado River water upstream of the Palo Verde Valley further threaten to reduce the river's level and its viability as a recreation resource and habitat for fish, birds and other animals. By contrast, flooding can also occur on the river, as it did in 1983, threatening structures and other improvements.

Colorado Desert Resource Area

The Palo Verde Valley occurs in the Colorado subarea of the Sonoran Desert. The Sonoran Desert is the richest and most varied of all desert plant and animal habitats. The Palo Verde Valley region would appear to typify and excel in these qualities, further enhancing the resource area with dramatic volcanic mountains encircling the expansive sense of space on the valley floor.

The unique and powerful effect of the desert environment attracts a wide range of users including RV and open air campers, hikers and equestrians, gem and mineral enthusiasts, photographers and artists, and all types of nature lovers. Amateur archaeologists, biologists and geologists also frequent these desert lands where geological structures and resources, and wildlife are quite varied, conspicuous and accessible.

Mayflower Park

Mayflower County Park, located on the Colorado River northeast of the City, is approximately 25 years old, but has seen substantial growth in the past six years. Mayflower Park, located immediately north of 6th Avenue, presently provides 188 RV spaces, of which 152 are full service (electric and water) and 36 are "primitive" sites.

Amenities at the Park include a swimming beach on a lagoon, limited boat launch facilities, RV storage, septic tanks, dump station and restrooms. Limited boat launch facilities and the lack of significant commercial services appear to make Mayflower Park less competitive during the summer season. There are plans to expand the number of RV sites. The Park is entirely operated by the County and volunteers.

McIntyre Park

McIntyre Park is about 20 years old, and has been quite successful in attracting business, both during the season and in the summer months. The park has a total of 185 RV spaces, of which 125 are full-service and 60 are "primitive." Amenities at the Park include an excellent swimming beach which attracts many visitors, year-round boat launch, mini-general store of approximately 1,500 square feet, gas and propane sales, ski rentals, septic tanks and dump station, and 100 spaces of RV storage. A substantial potential for growth would allow the doubling of RV and other facilities and could increase high season business by 200%, and summer business by 80%.

Blythe Marina

As with Mayflower and McIntyre Parks, Blythe Marina is owned by Riverside County and completely operated by a concessionaire. The Blythe Marina has 250 RV spaces, of which 75 spaces are serviced with electricity, water and sewer; 100 spaces with electric and water; and 75 primitive spaces. During the season, occupancy is at 100%, with summer occupancy being about 50%. Amenities include a swimming beach on a lagoon, year-round boat launch facilities, swimming pool, recreation room, convenience store (2,000 square feet), laundry and gasoline sales on the dock. As with the other parks, there is substantial potential for growth: approximately 75% of the current level of business during the summer and about 150% during the season.

Future City Park Facilities

As future parks and recreation facilities are planned, consideration must be given to those who use the parks. Parks also play an important part in attracting the non-resident "snow bird", tourist and visitor. The City's parks and open space areas should illustrate the pride and enjoyment of the City's residents for the rural desert community environment.

Table III-15
Standards for Recreational Areas

TYPE OF PARK AREA	ACRES/1000 POP.	SITE SIZE IDEAL/MIN.	RADIUS OF AREA SERVED
PLAYGROUNDS	1.5	4 AC./2 AC.	0.5 MILES
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	2.0	10 AC./5 AC.	0.5 MILES
PLAY FIELDS	1.5	15 AC./10 AC.	1.5 MILES
COMMUNITY PARKS	3.5	100 AC./40 AC.	2.0 MILES
DISTRICT PARKS	3.5	200 AC./100 AC.	3.0 MILES
REGIONAL PARKS	15.0	500+ AC./VARIES	10. MILES

The Quimby Act

The City is empowered by the Quimby Act (California Government Code, Section 66477) to establish a formula and levy a fee or another type of mitigation to assure the provision of adequate park and recreation facilities. The Quimby Act states that the City may require the dedication of land or impose a fee in lieu of land, or a combination of both. The dedication of lands or the payment of in-lieu fees is specifically directed to the provision of park or recreation areas, and is applied as a condition of approval of a tentative map or plan approval. The Quimby Act further states that the amount of land dedicated or fees paid are to be based on residential densities approved on a tentative map or development plan (Conditional Use Permit or Plot Plan).

If the City is to provide for the increased demand to be generated for park and recreational facilities it will be necessary to establish a mechanism by which fees or land (or both) may be collected by the City. The rural environment does not replace the need for these vitally important facilities, which as discussed above, are essential to encourage social interaction and community cohesion. The City is required by state law to collect impact fees based upon actual projected needs. And these funds and or lands must be utilized within five years from their collection. An impact assessment should be prepared to determine the level of mitigation needed to assure adequate parks and recreation facilities in the future. Quimby Act fees can also be used to assure the coordinated development of recreational activities and programs, which will optimize the use of these valuable community assets.

PARKS GOAL

1. Assure the promotion and enhancement of City and regional parks, recreation and open space resources which provide opportunities for healthful, active, cultural and aesthetic enjoyment of the physical environment.

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PARKS POLICIES

1. The City shall take an active role in the preservation of the Colorado Desert Resource Area and the right of access without undue restriction by governmental regulation.
2. The City shall take an active role in preserving the viability of the Colorado River Resource Area through the coordination with state, federal and other appropriate agencies.
3. The City shall cooperate and coordinate with and encourage the County of Riverside on proposed development within the Colorado Desert and River Resources Areas, and the provision of future regional park facilities.
4. Enhanced accessibility shall be included in the planning of all park areas, recognizing the needs of the disabled, senior citizens and others with special needs.
5. The City shall determine and select appropriate types and locations of future park, recreation, and open space areas, which shall be delineated in the General Plan.
6. The City shall levy adequate parkland fees and/or secure appropriate lands to establish, improve and maintain the city park system, in conformance with the Quimby Act.
7. The City shall develop a master plan of parks and open space development for the utilization of park development fees and dedicated lands collected under the Quimby Act or donated to the City.
8. Pocket park development shall be encouraged as a means of effectively distributing public park or open space lands throughout the City to provide special neighborhood character, open space and recreation opportunities to residents and visitors.
9. Utilizing the 1972 Landscape and Lighting Maintenance Act, the Mello-Roos Public Improvements Act or other appropriate mechanism, all new public park and open space areas shall be placed within a landscape maintenance assessment district to assure the long-term maintenance and operation of these facilities without further burdening the City General Fund.
10. City shall actively pursue the development and implementation of a master plan of Quechan Park, which should provide for the development of a marina, RV park, day-use and other appropriate recreation and commercial support facilities, including hotel/motel facilities.
11. City shall pursue the development of municipal boat launch and river front beach facilities along the Colorado River.
12. The City shall analyse the economic feasibility of upgrading Municipal Golf Course facilities, scheduling fee increases and promoting the use of the golf course to optimize the City's investment.

13. The City shall encourage the development of RV park facilities of quality design and construction within the City limits.

TRAILS

Background

Opportunities for bicycling, horseback riding, jogging and hiking can decrease vehicular transportation demands and increase recreational activities. Bicycles account for 15 percent or more of daily trip making in many areas with favorable terrain and climatic conditions (as exist throughout much of Blythe and the Palo Verde Valley). Nationwide, it is estimated that 40 percent of the population owns bicycles. The nationwide bicycle ownership percentage applied to the City's ultimate population projection of 60,000 (excluding the Sphere of Influence) indicates that 24,000 bicycles could exist for utilitarian and/or recreational use. The three classifications of bikeways are as follows:

Bikeway Classes

Class I Bikeway - (Bike Path or trail) Provides a completely separated right of way designated for the exclusive use of bicycles. Crossflows of pedestrians and vehicles are minimized. In Blythe, this class of bikeway will occur within parkway areas and designed to be eight feet wide and to meander.

Class II Bikeway - (Bike Lane) Provides a restricted right of way designated for the exclusive use or semi-exclusive use of bicycles with through-travel by motorists or pedestrians prohibited, but with crossflows of pedestrian and motor traffic permitted.

Class III Bikeway - (Bike Route) Provides for a right of way designated by signage or permanent markings with shared use of pedestrians and/or motorists.

Safety

Safety issues include conflicts with vehicles, assault vulnerability on trails with low use, conflicts among trail users (bicycles/ horses/pedestrians), and bicycle security at the non-home end of the trip.

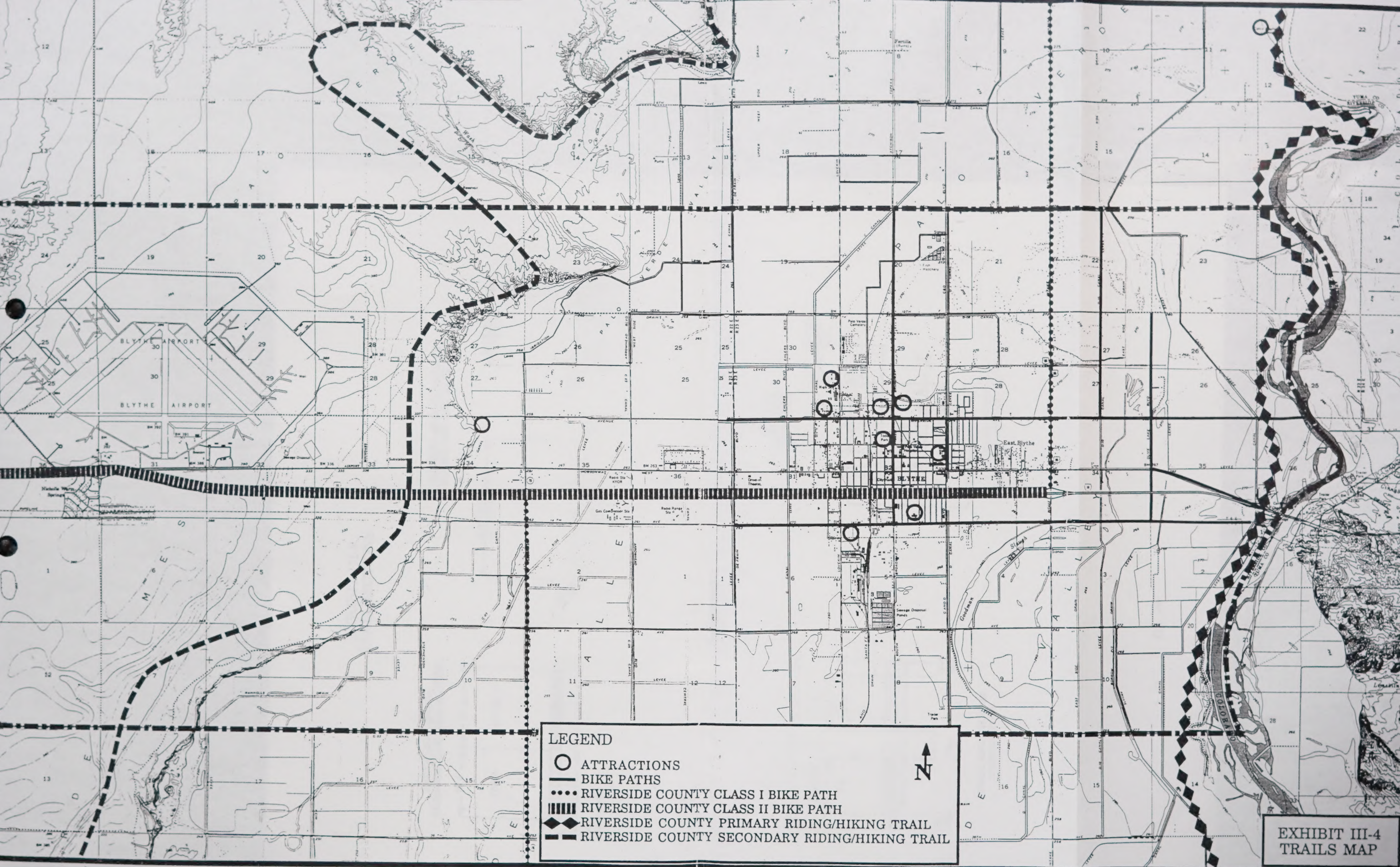
Conflicts with vehicles may occur when trails are on-street, or when off-street trails cross streets and driveways at grade. On-street bikeways (Class II and III facilities) provide communication of bicycle traffic to motorists, yet no real protection to bicyclists. Class II and III bikeways should be restricted to collector roadways with forecasted vehicular traffic well below available capacity, such as Barnard Street or Chanslor Way. On such trails, it is necessary to ensure that drainage/wastewater grates have slits oriented perpendicular to the lane.

Along off-street trails with low use, user safety is a concern. Trail security can be improved by providing a minimum width of 10 feet to allow maintenance, emergency and patrol vehicles to use the path; and by increasing the number of users by combining bicycle, equestrian and hiking trails.

The combining of uses on a trail introduces the potential for on-trail conflicts. In view of the average bicycle speed of 10 MPH on an even grade and 20 to 30 MPH on downhill grades, it is necessary to provide minimum width separations between opposing directions and between horses and hikers. The Institute of Transportation Engineers has documented widths for safe operation as noted below:

- Two-way off-street bike path-minimum paved width of 8 feet and a desirable width of 12 feet, plus a 2 foot graded width on each side.
- Two-way bike path with pedestrian use-minimum 2.5 foot horizontal separation (preferably more) between bicycles and pedestrians; plus a minimum 4 feet width for two way pedestrian use.

The minimum width for two-way equestrian paths is 8 feet, plus a minimum 2 foot width on each side. Typical cross-sections of the various trail combinations are illustrated in Exhibit III-5.



LEGEND

- ATTRACTIONS
- BIKE PATHS
- RIVERSIDE COUNTY CLASS I BIKE PATH
- ||||| RIVERSIDE COUNTY CLASS II BIKE PATH
- ◆◆◆ RIVERSIDE COUNTY PRIMARY RIDING/HIKING TRAIL
- RIVERSIDE COUNTY SECONDARY RIDING/HIKING TRAIL



EXHIBIT III-4
TRAILS MAP

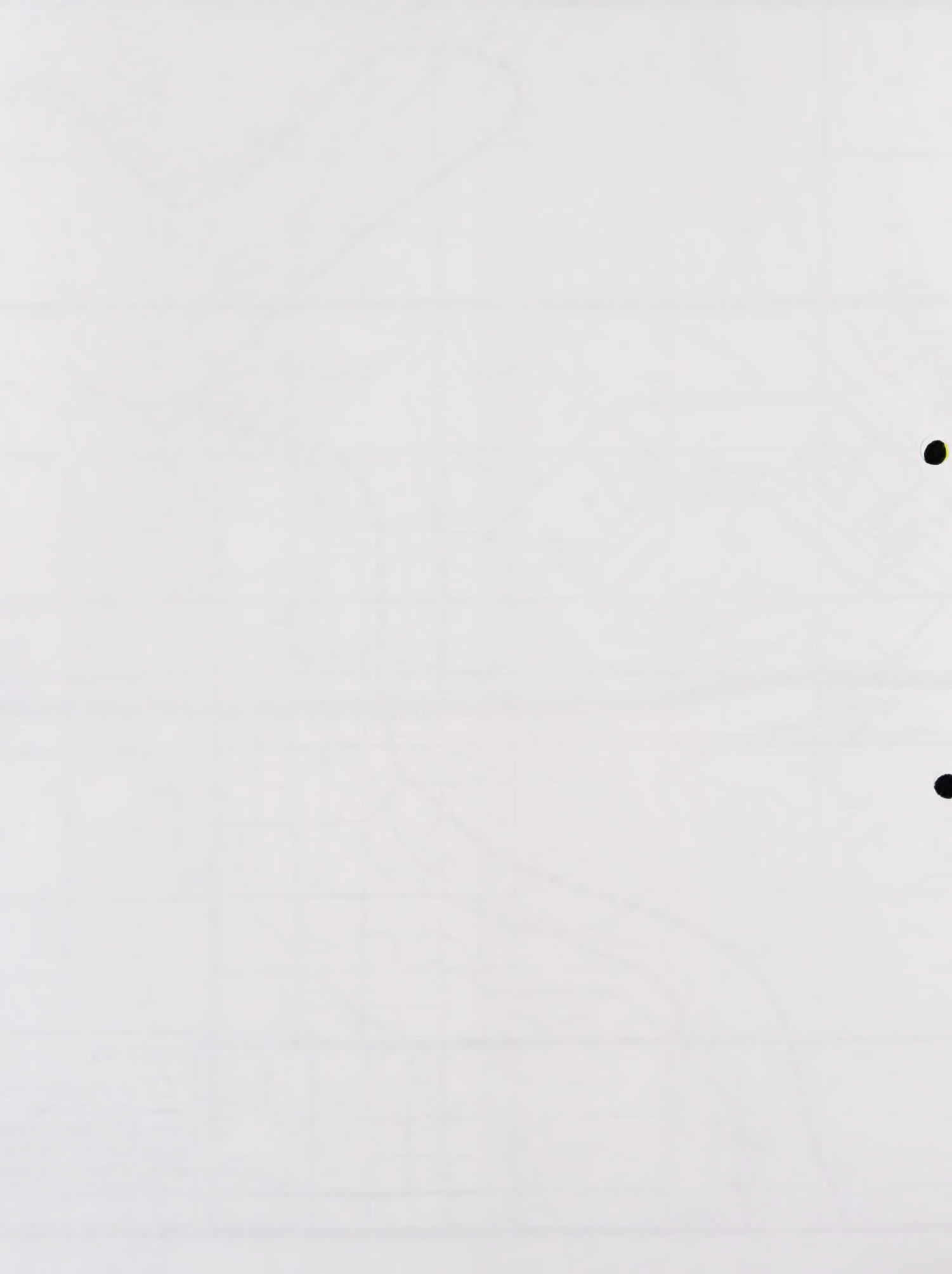
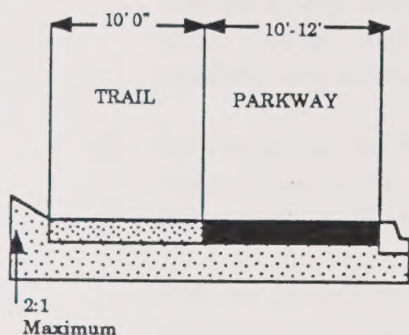
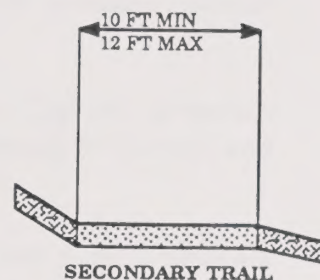
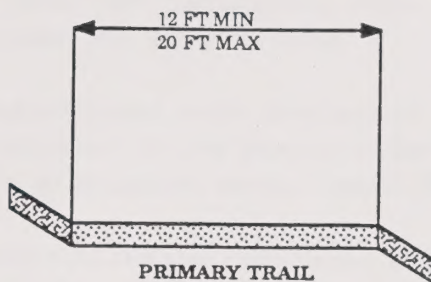


EXHIBIT III-5 TRAIL SECTIONS

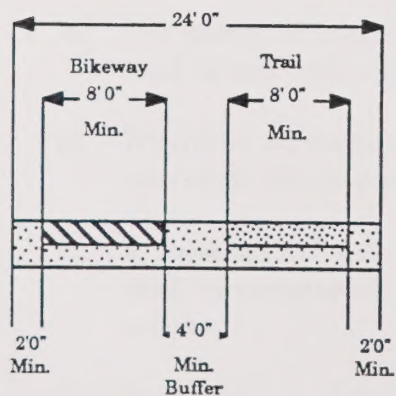
EQUESTRIAN TRAIL
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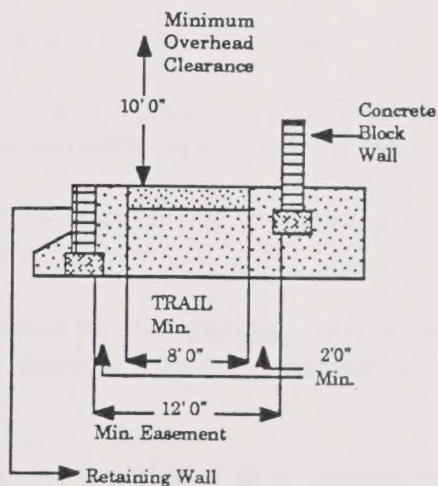
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
RIDING AND HIKING TRAILS



TRAIL DETAILS



TRAIL AND BIKEWAY
COMBINATION

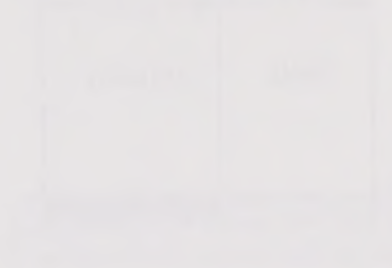
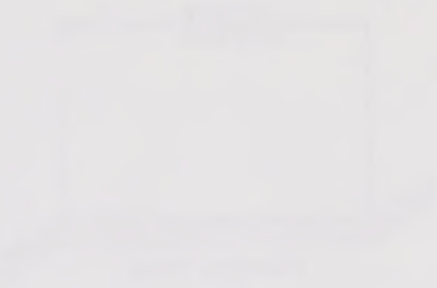
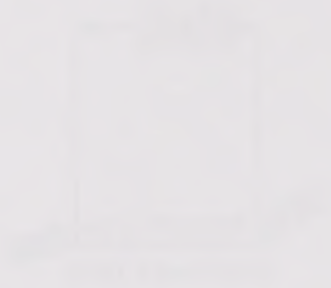


TRAIL ADJACENT TO
FENCE AND RETAINING WALL

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8. Recognize the Colorado River Resource Area as a valuable open space and community resource, and encourage the preservation of its recreational trails.
9. Seek to develop trails and related limited facilities for horseback riding, hiking, non-motorized bicycling, and jogging along the Colorado River that inter-connects City, County and State parks and recreational areas, and provides linkage opportunities between open space and recreation areas.
10. As a condition for future improvements and/or development the City will procure a right-of-way in fee or an easement for the purpose of developing a bikeway and riding trail in those corridors so designated on the General Plan.
11. New residential developments that envision recreational land uses shall incorporate appropriate pedestrian and bike trail connections to the City-wide recreational system.
12. Future primary equestrian and hiking trails shall be developed within a right-of-way in fee or an easement with minimum width of twelve feet to a maximum width of twenty feet.
13. Secondary equestrian and hiking trails shall be developed within trail easements or rights-of-way of ten to twelve feet depending on the terrain.
14. Overhead clearance for equestrian trails shall be a minimum of ten feet.
15. The design standard for any Primary bikeway and equestrian trail combination shall be twenty-four feet so as to provide for adequate buffering between the two uses.
16. Where an equestrian trail is located between a fence and/or a retaining wall, a minimum standard of twelve feet will be required.
17. A standardized safe crossing sign to warn motorists of impending trail crossings shall be permanently installed and located in advance of all trail intersections with streets.
18. Trail signs shall be posted to indicate the name, destination and mileage where applicable and shall identify hazard areas and safety precautions. Signs shall be designed and placed in accordance with the standards of the City of Blythe.

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